

6(c) Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme

Mr Chair,

It is deeply regrettable that Syria's only response to date to the July Decision addressing its repeated use of chemical weapons has been to pursue a misguided public relations campaign. A campaign that denies the Syrian regime's repeated use of chemical weapons; accuses anyone that challenges them of being part of a western plot; and portrays the OPCW and the United Nations as biased, incompetent and lacking integrity.

The reality is very different. For seven long years Syria has failed to provide a credible Declaration on its chemical weapons programme. The scale and scope of its programme is slowly being revealed by the DAT, as a result of persistent investigation, involving the collection of hundreds of samples. The latest monthly report by the DG confirms Syria has made yet more amendments to its Declaration. No other state has ever failed so comprehensively to get the basics right. Hundreds of tonnes of chemical weapons agent and precursors and thousands of munitions remain unaccounted for.

Since Syria acceded to the Convention the regime has been found by the UN's Joint Investigative Mechanism and the IIT to have used chemical weapons against its own people on seven separate occasions. Those findings and the evidential base supporting them have been presented in meticulous detail for us all to see.

The Syrian regime's response and that of its Russian backers has been to double-down on attacking on the Technical Secretariat. Syria would be better advised to focus on meeting the deadline to respond to the decision taken by this Council in July.

Should Syria choose a different path it will be for the Conference of States Parties to decide on next steps.

The Syrian regime's repeated use of chemical weapons has provided a backdrop for others to also break the taboo and we have seen chemical weapons used in Malaysia, Iraq, my own country and most recently in Russia.

Failing to address Syria's chemical weapons use risks undoing the hard-won international agreement to put an end to the development and use of these appalling weapons.

Thank you Mr Chair.